

# Fishermen adopt new tactics for illegal fishing

MASAKA

By Dismus Buregyeya

Some fishermen have returned to the fishing business on Lake Victoria with new illegal fishing tactics.

The fishermen hide their boats and nets in the forests and after nightfall they access the lake, especially in Kalangala and Masaka areas.

The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) operations officer for Kalangala district, Capt. Nathan Abaho, said they have also changed the mode of transporting fish.

"Some of the immature fish is transported under ice trucks," he said.

Abaho added that fish transporters smuggle immature fish to markets using shortcuts.

The UPDF marine force is also closely monitoring prominent fish traders and their agents linked to the Pansiono Rwakataka agents who are resuming illicit operations on Lake Albert.

## Political influence

Speaking to stakeholders during a meeting organised by the Association of Fishers and Lake Users of Uganda (AFALU) in Masaka recently, Capt James Ewaga cited political interference and propaganda against the operations among the challenges.

He said many of the culprits apprehended in illegal fishing activities use names of prominent people and



Lt Col Jaffer Kasirivu displaying immature fish impounded in Masaka recently. Photo by Dismus Buregyeya

politicians to cover up their actions.

The fishing fraternity from the greater Masaka led by the AFALU chairperson, Godfrey Ssenyonga, asked the Government to embark on the fight against the importation of illegal fish nets.

"Regulation of fishing nets is the biggest challenge facing the fishing sector. We need to stop the entry of illegal nets in

## BETWEEN THE LINES:

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the country," Ewaga said.

The meeting resolved that all fishing nets manufacturing

factories should stop the production of undersize nets by June 30. "We must have five and six inch nets in circulation for tilapia and Nile Perch respectively," Ewaga added.

He said AFALU is going to embark on the exercise decongesting the lake by regulating the fishermen.

Ewaga added that registered fishermen will have designated

fishing areas and authorised fishermen will be required to have licensed boats and operation permits.

The chairperson greater Masaka Fishing Sector, Joseph Kimera stressed the need to support improved sanitation standards and personal hygiene of fishermen.

He also thanked President Yoweri Museveni for initiating the operation against illegal

fishing on the lake.

Kimera said the deployment of the UPDF has registered significant achievements in the fishing sector.

Last year, Museveni deployed UPDF marines in Masaka after reports had cited the area as the base for immature fish smuggled to Congo.

Over 100 fishermen and traders have been arrested and imprisoned in Masaka, with tonnes of immature fish impounded since UPDF marines were deployed in the area.

## Operations

At least 70 vehicles including motorcycles carrying immature fish are held at the Kasijagirwa base in Masaka.

Over 10,000 fishermen and their families who have been operating in areas which are not gazetted as landing sites in Masaka and Kalangala districts have migrated to other areas.

The head of marine force operations, Maj. James Nuwagaba, pitched camp in Masaka, Rakai, Kalungu and Kalangala landing sites last month on a crackdown of the habitual immature fish transactions and illegal fishing gears.

The operation caused an outcry from area leaders including Bukoto East Woman MP in Masaka Florence Namayanja as well as the Masaka district council chairperson Jude Mbabali.

The leaders claimed that the marines wrongly evicted the affected people.